

The gift of the author

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Doctor MORSE's SERMON,

AT THE

Death and Interment

OF THE

Hon. JAMES RUSSELL, Esq.

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The CHARACTER and REWARD of a good
and faithful Servant illustrated

IN A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED AT CHARLESTOWN,

APRIL 29, 1798,

THE LORD'S-DAY FOLLOWING

THE

DEATH AND INTERMENT

OF THE

Honorable JAMES RUSSELL, Esq.

WHO DIED APRIL 24th,

Aged 83 Years.

By JEDIDIAH MORSE, D.D.

MINISTER of the CONGREGATION in CHARLESTOWN.

Printed by SAMUEL HALL, No. 53, Cornhill, BOSTON.

1798.

IT is proper, as an apology for the Author, that the reader of the following Discourse be informed, that it was composed, *necessarily*, in great haste, and immediately after the fatigues of a long journey, and is published nearly verbatim, as it was delivered,

May 1, 1798,



MATTHEW XXV. 21.

His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

NO religion, that has ever been propagated among mankind, holds out to its disciples, motives to a good life so numerous, rational, and persuasive; or consolations under their various afflictions so substantial and effectual to their support, as the religion of Christ, taught us in his Gospel. And perhaps there is no part of this Gospel which furnishes stronger proof of the truth of the foregoing observation than the words of the text,

THE parable, of which the text is a part, is one of the most instructive portions of the practical part of Scripture. It very pertinently follows the parable of the virgins, and seems designed to illustrate the dispensations of God to man, with regard to his various gifts; and to engage our most faithful and diligent improvement of all the blessings we enjoy, whether of nature, providence or grace, be they great or small, many or few, under the
constant

constant belief and apprehension that we must give an account of our management of them to our Lord, in the day when he shall sit to judge the world.

WE are taught in this parable, a doctrine peculiar to the Gospel, and which the celebrated Mr. Necker, in his excellent book on the importance of religious opinions, mentions as forming one of the *distinctive characters of its morality*, viz. that whether our condition and circumstances be high or low, rich or poor, "*if we improve the talents we possess equally, our reward also shall be equal*:"—the improvement is regarded, not the station. The faithful servant, who moves in the humble walks of life, shall be rewarded with equal liberality, in proportion to his capacity for enjoyment, as the good and faithful servant who fills the highest station in society. This is a doctrine consonant to the character of Christ and his Gospel, and peculiarly comforting to the weaker and humbler members of his flock.

IN that part of the parable which we have selected for our text, rewards of grace in a future state, the most liberal and free, are promised to all who shall have improved, with fidelity and diligence, their several talents in this life. They, therefore, who are called to sorrow for deceased relations and friends of this character, may be comforted in the assurance, that they have entered "*into the joy of their Lord*." And what motives to fidelity, in the service of our Lord, more encouraging and animating, can be offered, than the everlasting possession of the joys of Heaven? And what consolations so soothing and supporting to bereaved

bereaved friends can be presented, as a well-grounded hope, that the dear relation, whose decease and absence they mourn, is indeed *present with the Lord*, in the full possession of the ineffable joys that spring from his presence?

In applying the words of the text to the present occasion, and with a view to deduce from them that instruction and comfort which they are adapted to yield, I shall call your attention to the CHARACTER and REWARD of a *good and faithful servant*. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

GOD, in his wisdom, dispenses the endowments of nature, the gifts of his providence, and the blessings of his grace, variously, as so many talents, to his servants, to be employed for his glory, in promoting the good of mankind. He hath placed his offspring in different ranks and circumstances—*high and low, rich and poor*—thus laying a foundation for the exercise of those graces and virtues, which are the ornament and glory of our nature. To some he gives *five talents*, to others *two*, and to all *one*, with a charge to each, to "occupy till he come." Now *he* may be considered as a *good and faithful servant*, who, in the rank he sustains in life, and according to his ability and circumstances, sincerely and diligently endeavours to advance the honor of God, and the greatest good and happiness of his fellow creatures. To this end, it is indispensably necessary that he love God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself; otherwise we cannot

cannot suppose him capable of performing his duty acceptably, either to the one or the other. Love constitutes the spring and soul of our duty, both to God and man.

THE good and faithful servant, quickened and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and influenced and directed by heavenly love and wisdom, unites and bends all his efforts to do good. To qualify himself for usefulness, he assiduously cultivates his *reason* and *understanding*, that he may accurately discern between good and evil, and be enabled to inquire into the causes, relations, and consequences of things, and to collect the proper rules of judgment and action. He is careful to store his *memory* with useful ideas and experiences; and his conscience is kept tender, vigilant, and faithful, by a constant and sacred adherence to its dictates.

He is at due pains to keep under his *body* by a steady course of sobriety, temperance, and industry, and to employ all its members in the service and for the honour of God and the welfare of mankind. He offers it "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God," and considers it a *reasonable* service.

He is diligent in his *occupation* to provide things honest and decent in the sight of all men, for his own subsistence and those dependent on his care; and does not squander his time nor his estate in idleness, or sinful excesses of any kind. If God, in his goodness, crown his industry with *wealth*, and reward his merit with *promotion* to offices of honour and trust, he endeavours, by a judicious distribution of his redundant affluence, to serve the cause of humanity and the public interest, and in this way

way to render his wealth a blessing to himself and those around him. The *power* and *influence* attached to the office he sustains, he exercises as "a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." He bears not the sword of justice in vain, and is a minister of God for good to society. By an upright and diligent discharge of the duties of his office and station, by detecting, reproofing, and punishing offenders, with impartiality and fidelity, he avoids a participation in the sins of others. His influence is ever cast into the scale of virtue, peace, good order, truth, and religion. With dignity and mildness, he "commands his children and household after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment." He is ever ready to do what in him lies to restore and preserve peace among brethren—to "rescue the oppressed from their enemies—to deliver the poor that cry, and the fatherless and him that hath none to help—and to cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. He putteth on righteousness and it clotheth him—his judgment is as a robe and a diadem. He is eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor; and the cause which he knoweth not he searcheth out."

But, in the providence of God, he has been called to walk in the painful, but pleasant paths of *science* and *literature*, and has acquired a fund of useful knowledge, he hides not the light which he possesses under a bushel, but exhibits it in such a manner as that it may illuminate, inform, and benefit others. He considers *health*, *time*, and *opportunity* as talents of inestimable value, and of precarious tenure,

here, and industriously improves them while they last, in fulfilling the duties of his calling, and promoting the present and future happiness of others. Whatever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with his might, knowing that the hour must soon arrive which shall terminate all his earthly labours. Sensible that he must surely die, and uncertain as to the time, he studiously endeavours to preserve his soul and his house in constant preparation for the important event.

In the discharge of *civil* and *domestic* duties, the good and faithful servant is diligent and conscientious. He is subject, with all good fidelity, and for conscience sake, to the powers that be, and considers and respects them as "God's ministers." He renders "tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." He possesses that true patriotism, which continually prompts him to do all in his power to serve the interests, and advance the honour of his country. In all his domestic and social relations, he demeanes himself as becomes a good parent, child, relation, friend and neighbour. Such is the character and conduct of *the good and faithful servant*, as respects the *present life*.

As an *immortal being*, a candidate for future and eternal blessedness, the good and faithful servant pays devout and persevering attention to all the duties of religion. The *holy Scriptures* he values above all books, considers them as containing the words of eternal life, and makes them the foundation and guide of his faith and conduct. The law of the Lord is his delight, and he meditates therein day

day and night. JESUS CHRIST, he considers, as the great Example, Instructor and Redeemer of men; and as such he imitates, obeys and believes in him. On his merits he rests all his hopes of acceptance with God, and future happiness. He reverences and scrupulously observes the various *institutions* of religion, not only from a regard to the divine authority which sanctions them, but from a conviction of their adaptedness to the present state of man, and their salutary and excellent effects upon society. He considers and "calls the *sabbath* a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable"—and he honours the Lord on that day, not doing his own works, nor finding his own pleasure, nor speaking his own words—and commands his children and domestics to remember this sacred day to keep it holy. With candor and self-application, he hears the word of God publicly preached, and religiously and regularly attends upon the holy *sacraments*, with a view to exhibit in his life those amiable fruits, which they are designed to produce in their worthy receivers. He neglects neither *secret* nor *family prayer*, and devotes himself to God in all the duties of piety and virtue. Such, in brief, is the character of *the good and faithful servant*.

THE REWARD which such a servant may confidently expect in consequence, not of his own merit, but merely of divine promise, remains to be briefly considered.

THE enrapturing eulogy which he will hear from the lips of his Lord and Judge, at death, and particularly on the judgment day, is, in kindness, recorded for our present encouragement, and is expressed

expressed in the words of the text—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE faithful servant, we are here informed, will be highly *commended*, as well as liberally *rewarded*. It is to be publicly proclaimed, that he hath *done well*. It is remarked by Dr. Doddridge, that the original word *eu*, rendered *well done*, has "a peculiar force and energy, far beyond what can be exactly expressed in English. It was used (he says) by auditors and spectators, in any public exercise, to express their highest approbation and applause when any part had been excellently performed."

THIS public applause and commendation, from the Judge, constitutes an important article in the reward of the good and faithful servant. Nothing yields higher and nobler satisfaction to a good servant of a kind and beloved master, than his warm and unequivocal approbation of his services.

BUT a positive and substantial reward, of a two-fold nature, awaits the faithful servant. For his fidelity in the management of a *few things*—by his diligent and proper improvement of the few talents entrusted to him in this life, he is to be advanced to be ruler over *many things*: More talents are to be entrusted to him; a more extensive field of employment; nobler enjoyments, and more exalted, refined, and lasting honours are to be the rewards of his fidelity. In the mean time, he is invited, (and how charming will be the inviting voice!) "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Unspeakable

Unspeakable delight will now fill his enlarged soul. It is the place where God and Christ, holy angels, and glorified saints dwell together in highest harmony. Such a place must be full of joy. Pain, sorrow, and tears are unknown in this region of purity and pleasure. He now receives, as the fruit of his light and momentary afflictions in the present life, *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" (2 Cor. iv. 17.) These mansions of joy are the LORD's, he having, at an immense price, purchased and prepared them for himself and his friends, who, in every age, should believe and obey his Gospel. Vain will be all attempts to describe this *joy of the Lord*, or the happiness that the good and faithful servant enjoys, upon his entrance into it; for it is written in that book in which life and immortality are brought to light, and which furnishes *all* the information we have of a future state; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We may therefore give full scope to our imaginations, and comprise in one view, all the sources and items of happiness which we can devise, and yet we must *believe* that, even then, we fall infinitely short of what, in truth and reality, the good and faithful servant possesses on his admission into the joy of his Lord.

MY BRETHREN, what motives to fidelity, in our divine Master's service, are here presented. Is it possible that any of us have hitherto remained, and that any will still remain, uninfluenced by them? If any persist in disregarding these motives, and continue in open rebellion against their Lord and Master,

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Master, or even in a state of sloth and inactivity in his service, the awful sentence, pronounced on the unprofitable servant, assuredly, in justice, awaits him: "Take the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents: And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This dismal prospect should alarm and arouse every slothful and unprofitable servant to a sense of his danger, and prompt him to a vigorous and persevering application to his duty; that he may redeem the time which he has already lost, and secure, through the grace of the Gospel, an admittance into the joy of his Lord.

WHAT animating prospects has the good and faithful servant of the Lord, to cheer his heart and enliven his hopes, under all the trials of life, and particularly in the hour of death. *The joy set before him*, as in the instance of the Author and Finisher of our faith, enables him to endure, with patience and resignation, the severest afflictions. And in the near approach of death, he can adopt the language of the Apostle, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.— I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day."

WHEN our dear friends die, supported by such hopes and prospects, well founded, how can we mourn their departure? Why should we wish them detained any longer, in a world like this, from

from the joy of their Lord? What sources of solid and sweet comfort do such deceased servants of the Lord leave behind them, to solace and sooth the hearts of their surviving friends. When bereaved of our dear, pious relations, let us comfort our hearts, by frequently reflecting, "That unutterable transport will overflow the breast of every real *Christian*, when his gracious *Master* shall condescend, in so honourable a manner, to commemorate his honest, though feeble attempts of service, and shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." May that joy be the great object of our hopes and pursuits, and may our daily care, in the improvement of every *talent* lodged in our hands, be a token to us, that it will be sure and great."

DURING the preceding discourse, I doubt not your thoughts have been turned to that *good and faithful servant* of the Lord, whose decease we this day so sincerely lament, to whom a great part of the observations we have made pertinently apply, and to whose memory we assuredly owe a respectful tribute.

MR. RUSSELL, the second son of the Hon. DANIEL RUSSELL, was born in Charlestown, August 5th, (O.S.) 1715. His mother was the only daughter of the Hon. CHARLES CHAMBERS. His ancestors, for many preceding generations, both in the male and female line, were remarkable for their talents, integrity, usefulness, and respectability.—

* Deddridge. They

They succeeded each other in several elevated and responsible offices in civil government, the duties of which they discharged with great fidelity and acceptance. Their worthy descendant, whose remains we yesterday followed to the tomb, was in no respect behind his ancestors in point of useful talents, integrity, and weight of character. Added to an early and good education in the common and useful branches of knowledge, he had the inestimable advantage of excellent parental instruction, government, and example, which, by the blessing of God attending them, formed him to those habits of integrity, industry, benevolence, hospitality and profound respect for the institutions of religion, and enkindled and cherished in him that patriotism, love of order and good government, which strongly marked his character through life.

He was the husband of one wife, the daughter of the Hon. THOMAS GRAVES, to whom he was married at the age of 23 years, and with whom he lived, in the enjoyment of as much domestic happiness as falls to the lot of man in the present life, nearly forty years. She was the mother of eleven children, nine of whom survived her.* A comprehensive

* THE following are the names, &c. of the deceased children of Mr. RUSSELL.

CHARLES RUSSELL, born January 7, 1739, received a public education at Harvard University—was a respectable Physician, and died at Antigua, May 27, 1780.

THOMAS RUSSELL, born April 12, 1740, was one of the most respectable merchants in America, and died in Boston, April 8, 1796.

REBECCA RUSSELL, born September 8, 1743, died in infancy.

JAMES RUSSELL, born July 12, 1745, died at the age of two years.

CHAMBERS RUSSELL, born December 3, 1752, was educated a merchant—

ensive summary of her character was written and published at the time of her death, as follows.—

“A life of undissembled piety, and the exercise of the most amiable social virtues, fixed her strongly in the affections of all her friends, and has rendered her loss severe indeed to those most nearly connected with her, on whose minds her excellent character is indelibly marked.”

In the various offices which Mr. RUSSELL was called to fill in this town, and those more elevated ones, of Treasurer,* Legislator, Judge, and Counsellor, which he sustained in the then province of Massachusetts-Bay, he ever proved himself to be a *good and faithful servant*.

His talents were of the solid and useful, rather than of the shewy and brilliant kind. He possessed a clear understanding, an independent spirit, a sound judgment, and a retentive memory. But integrity of heart formed the most prominent feature in his character. This disposition discovered itself in all his concerns. With his inmost soul he abhorred deceit and falsehood. In the cause of righteousness he was vigilant, indefatigable, and severe against artifice and treachery. In regard to the

merchant—was an amiable and rising character, and died at Charleston, South-Carolina, March 16, 1790.

MARGARET RUSSELL, born December 7, 1757, was married to JOHN CODMAN, Esq. merchant, of Boston, was a most benevolent and excellent woman, and died at Boston, March 12, 1789.

ONE son and four daughters are still living.

* Mr. RUSSELL was, a number of years, Treasurer of the county of Middlesex, and of the town: And he was Treasurer to the Proprietors of Charles-River bridge from its erection to the day of his death.

the legacies left by several liberal minded men to this town, for the public good, he was zealous that they should be rigidly appropriated to the several uses designated by their donors, and ever vigorously opposed their alienation or diversion, in any degree, to other purposes. The last, and not the least useful public business which he performed, and which was not completed till the commencement of his last sickness, was, to disembarraß some valuable legacies bequeathed to the poor of this town, which had become perplexed and mixed with other funds, during the war, and to place them on an intelligible and safe footing. In accomplishing this business, for the performance of which no other person possessed so competent information, he has restored and secured to the poor a handsome and regular income. To the poor, indeed, in imitation of his ancestors, he has ever shewn himself a steady, able, faithful, and, according to his ability, liberal friend. By his charities he has caused many a widow's heart to sing for joy.

His attachment to his native town was singularly great. He unremittingly and with ardour, sought to promote its honour, ornament, prosperity and welfare ; and the plans he was continually devising for these purposes were generally disinterested, judicious, and practicable ; and many of them have, with expected benefit, been carried into effect. He was, in great truth, a FATHER of the town ; and such was the strength of his parental affection for it, that, in some striking instances, the interests of his own family were made subordinate to those of the town. His

His great object was to do good ; and his heart was, accordingly, continually devising liberal things. Of this, I myself have been a frequent witness. After I had taken my last leave of him, previous to my late journey, he said to me, " I have been thinking of a plan for the benefit of the poor of this town, which I will communicate to you when you return."*

He considered good education as of the highest importance to youth, and to the honour, freedom, and happiness of his country ; and therefore uniformly exerted his influence to promote it, both in the town and state, in private schools and in public seminaries.†

MR. RUSSELL was truly a peace-maker among brethren ; and from the confidence reposed in his judgment, candor and integrity, he was often called to arbitrate differences between contending parties, and to aid in ecclesiastical councils, invited to heal divisions in churches.

He was a professor, and a sincere, influential and uniform

* THE author of this discourse was absent on a journey during the last sickness, and till after the death of Mr. RUSSELL, so that he had no opportunity of knowing particularly what was the plan he contemplated. It originated, however, in his mind, from reading Count RUMFORD's ingenious and excellent Essays, the first number of which he had just finished, and was, no doubt, conformable, so far as the situation of this town would allow, to those *fundamental principles* laid down by the Count, for *General establishments for the relief of the poor* in all countries. It is wished the people of Charlestown may not lose sight of so benevolent and useful a plan.

† MR. RUSSELL was a great advocate for *social libraries*, particularly for the use of the *Clergy* in the country ; and often expressed a wish that gentlemen of property and benevolence would bequeath legacies for such establishments. It was his opinion that great good might result from them.

uniform friend and supporter of the christian religion. The religious duties of the Sabbath, of the family, and the closet, he regularly and devoutly performed. He not only believed, but he exemplified in his practice, the religion which he professed. And he experienced its comforts and supports in every period of his life, and particularly in his last sickness, which he endured with a calmness and resignation well becoming a good man. Two things he particularly desired—that he “might not outlive his usefulness,” and that he “might have an easy death.” In both, his desires were completely fulfilled. His judgment, memory, health, and social powers, continued, in a remarkable degree, unimpaired till a few weeks before his death. His sickness was short, and not extremely painful; and when the time of his departure arrived, without a groan or a struggle, he fell asleep.

He lived to a more advanced age than any of his ancestors in this country.* This may be ascribed to the blessing of God on his singular regularity of living, and to that soothing quiet and peace of mind which were the fruit of his integrity and usefulness; and we may add, as what contributed in no small degree to prolong his life, the exemplary, pious, and assiduous attention of his family.

IN Mr. RUSSELL, though an old man, we have all sustained a great loss. His country has lost one who

* MR. RUSSELL was in the eighty-third year of his age when he died. Of him it may be said, as it was of *Moses*, and with as much truth, perhaps, as of any man of Mr. RUSSELL's age, that has lived since that patriarch; “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.”

who was peculiarly concerned for its welfare :—this town, a father, the study of whose life it was to promote its prosperity :—the ministers of religion, a steady and sincere friend :—the church, a pillar :—the poor, a liberal benefactor :—the school, a zealous patron :—his friends, a frank, social and improving companion :—and his children, the best of fathers.

FOR our consolation under this affliction, let us consider that we have not to sorrow for our deceased friend as those who have no hope. Our grief is confined to *ourselves*. On *his* account we have no cause to weep. Ere now, we trust, he has received the commendation—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant," and has entered *into the joy of his Lord*. And we surely cannot wish his return from that abode of bliss to this world of sorrow. Let us rather adore the mercy and goodness of God in not taking him away in the prime of life and usefulness : and let it be our great business and care, to contemplate and exemplify his integrity, piety, charity, and patriotism, his hospitality, sobriety and temperance, and the parental and social virtues, which exalted and adorned his character. In so doing, we may hope, through the grace of the Gospel, on which he relied, and on which we must all rely for acceptance with God, to enjoy, even in this life, the peaceful fruit of our virtues, the testimony of a good conscience, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

A M E N.

who was constantly concerned for the welfare of
the town, a father, the body of which it was
to promote its prosperity—their children of the
light, a steady and honest trade—their children
a pillar—their poor, a liberal hand—their
school, a virtuous parent—their children, a virtuous
and improving congregation—and in their
death, the best of fathers.

For our consolation and the relief of our
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A. M. H. N.